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ABSTRACT

A need exists to train persons to work with hearing-impaired adults. While the physical effects of deafness are significant, the greatest impact on the hearing-impaired person lies in the psychological area. Psychological implications are separation from the mainstream, joining and identifying with persons of similar disabilities, and perceived academic inferiority. Formal education of the hearing-impaired child should begin as soon as the impairment has been diagnosed. Early training, preschool programs, and elementary and secondary education focus on development of language. Postsecondary programs, while not plentiful, are available. Continuing education programs are not nearly so prevalent. Trends in American society with implications for the hearing impaired are the movements (1) to an information society, (2) from institutional help to self-help, (3) toward a participatory democracy, and (4) from a hierarchical society to one comprised of networks. A hearing person/educator requires certain attributes to work with the hearing impaired: interest in working with them; natural, face-to-face communication; efforts to learn sign language; and use of interpreters and counselors who are hearing impaired. Techniques useful in educating the hearing impaired are learning centers; self-directed learning; use of deaf persons, interpreters, or other support persons; captioned films; and demonstrations. (YLB)

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ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE DEAF:

PRESENT DILEMMAS, FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

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ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE DEAF:

PRESENT DILEMMAS, FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

by Ollie Malone

Overview

This paper will focus on the adult education needs of a significant population in the community: those with hearing impairment. As such, this paper will:

* Define the population and provide a rationale for the study
* Describe the psychological implications of deafness
* Outline the educational development of the hearing-impaired person
* Identify the professionalization of the hearing-impaired
* Describe current adult education needs of the hearing-impaired
* Suggest present and future adult education issues for this population
* Outline strategies for identifying and educating the hearing-impaired.

Definition and Rationale: Who are the Deaf and Why Should They Be Studied?

The work of Schein and Delk (1974) suggests that there are 1.4 million persons in the United States with some degree of hearing impairment. Of that number, six hundred thousand would fall into the category of "deaf." What is the difference? Outler (1974) identifies six classes of hearing impairment, based on the individual's ability and willingness to communicate with others. At the lowest two levels are those classified as totally deaf, unable to speak; and totally deaf with deaf speech, but refusing to speak. The communication with these persons is totally via manual communication or paper and pencil. Outler identifies the third category as the deaf oralist: the person who may have no (or little) residual hearing, but still chooses to communicate using oral speech.

The fourth category identified is what Outler calls the "deafened." These

are persons who had normal hearing and speech at one time, but are now totally deaf. These persons may also be known as the post-lingual deaf (those losing their hearing after the development of language).

The hard-of-hearing occupy the fifth category. These persons may have hearing which is usable for speech purposes, have normal communication ability, and usually participate in regular educational programs.

The final category identified by Cutler is that of the hard-of-hearing signer. The individual has some ability to communicate normally through speech amplification, but was probably educated in a residential school for the deaf and prefers to communicate through manual communication.

In summary, the hearing impaired are persons who have lost some degree of hearing. They can be further separated by degree of hearing loss, primary mode of communication, and age at onset of deafness.

Each year, approximately 5,000 hearing-impaired students graduate from schools or programs designed to meet their educational needs. Upon entering the world of independent living, many are without any means of continuing their education which is, for the deaf, not only valuable for advancement and socialization, but essential for survival.

> Deafness is subtle and paradoxical, and it ramifies far beyond the immediate disability. It imposes few physical limitations, but its effects on social life and academic performance can be severe. It cripples neither the mind nor the body, but the ability to use our most elemental and pervasive form of communication, the human voice. Thus it strikes at the core of social life and of education. Many deaf students, including some you may wish to enroll, stand outside the boundaries of ordinary communication, and only special measures can stretch those boundaries to let them inside (Gallaudet, p. vii).

Although there are many programs to train teachers of deaf children, currently only three programs in the United States are designed to train persons

to work with adult hearing-impaired persons.

Clearly a need exists to sensitize other persons to the needs of hearing-impaired persons and, in some minimal way, prepare these persons to face these opportunities.

Psychological Implications of Deafness

The previous paragraphs focused on the physical effects of deafness, and whereas these are significant, the greatest impact on the hearing-impaired person lies in the psychological area. Hearing-impairment relegates the person to total separation from the mainstream of the population—a separation from which there is no reprieve.

This separation, according to Higgins (1980, p. 42) puts distance between the hearing person and the hearing-impaired person, but also enjoins the hearing-impaired person to persons of similar disabilities. Higgins further surmises that this enjoining of persons can be evidenced in the hearing-impaired person's search for likeness—identifying other persons like him/herself. Thus, persons with hearing impairment are likely to behave in a much friendlier manner with other hearing-impaired persons than with hearing persons.

A third psychological implication of deafness occurs in the area of the hearing-impaired person's perceived academic inferiority when s/he compares him/herself with their hearing counterparts. This characteristic can be found evident in many minority groups. Within the hearing-impaired population the problem is further compounded by the person's inability to validate their inferiority or superiority. For some, validation occurs by attending "hearing" schools.

Once again, the inability to verbalize concerns, challenges or questions penalizes the hearing-impaired person. This penalty becomes especially evident for the less-than-intellecually-bright hearing-impaired person.

In terms of innate intelligence, the deaf score on a level equal to that of their hearing counterparts when tested on standard tests of intelligence. Many of these tests, unfortunately, contain a language bias and, as such, would be rendered ineffective for use by the hearing-impaired child or adult. Because of the delay in language development by the hearing-impaired, traditional language-based tests of intelligence may produce skewed results. Where language is not a factor, the hearing-impaired have proven to be equals of the hearing.

Education of the Hearing-Impaired

The formal education of the hearing-impaired child should begin as soon as the hearing impairment has been diagnosed. This early training is designed to begin the development of language instruction. The goal of this training is to train the child to recognize the sounds which s/he is able to hear and to recognize the centrality of language in the learning process. Secondly, this training helps the parent of the hearing-impaired child recognize their role in the language development of their child and to assume their role as the conduit through which language learning is accomplished. This parent-infant training also assists the parent in the resolution of the questions, concerns, guilt, anger, or other emotions the parent may be experiencing. Because of the necessity of language learning and the critical role which the parent plays not only in the early development, but the subsequent development of the child as well, this learning could be rightfully be considered as the most important for

both parent and child. Important for the parent in resolving any issues which could hinder the development of a positive relationship between them and their child; important for the child in the development of the language as well as in creating a sense of curiosity toward the outside world—a curiosity which will be of considerable value in later learning.

Unfortunately, many hearing-impaired children are not diagnosed as hearing-impaired early enough to take advantage of such a parent-infant program. For many, diagnosis does not occur until the child has begun school and had an unsuccessful experience. This becomes especially true for the child who may have some residual hearing, but not enough to profit from a classroom experience. A second reason hearing-impaired children tend not to be enrolled in the parent-infant experience is due to the fact that many of these experiences occur in major cities, at universities, clinics, or hospitals, which make them out of reach for those parents residing in rural areas. Coupled with the physical inaccessibility is the fact that the majority of these parents do not know that such programs exist—nor do their physicians or other professionals. This fact is changing, fortunately, with the advent of such programs as the one at the Missouri School for the Deaf. In this program, the School hires an itinerant teacher who travels the state of Missouri working with parents of hearing-impaired children. This provides the parent with the kind of training and support they need, but does not require the added burden of the parent travelling to a distant city for the training.

Preschool programs are the next stage of educational development for the hearing-impaired child. These programs have similar objectives as their hearing counterparts: socialization, independent living skills, and further language

development training. Language development, as could be predicted, is an intensive, but ideally, enjoyable experience. Here the child interacts with other hearing-impaired students, teachers, and paraprofessionals. For many students, this is their first contact with other hearing-impaired children. These programs could occur independent of a formal school setting, within a residential school for the deaf, or as a day program supported by the local school district. The enactment of Public Law 94-142 ushered in many more pre-school and elementary programs for the hearing-impaired. Some of these programs utilized resource classrooms, others, itinerant teachers, and others, self-contained classrooms.

Elementary and secondary education for the hearing-impaired continues in the same manner as the preschool experience. The focus is still on the development of language—attempting to bridge the significant gap between the hearing-impaired child and his/her hearing counterpart. Like the pre-school experience, teaching may be done following an oral manner (where the teacher speaks, the children speechread, and hearing aids are used widely) or through what is known as "total" communication—where the teacher speaks, signs, and hearing aids may or may not be used.

Postsecondary education for the hearing-impaired, until 1968 was primarily found at Gallaudet College—the only liberal arts college in the world, at that time, designed for the hearing-impaired. Regional postsecondary programs for the hearing-impaired began in 1968-69 through the efforts of the U.S. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Three programs—Delgado Junior College in New Orleans, the St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute (Minnesota), and the Seattle Community College were

established to provide this much-needed training. A fourth program has since been established at California State University at Northridge (Duncan, 1984). Today, numerous programs exist for the vocational training of hearing-impaired persons. These programs are primarily available at community colleges in virtually every major city in the United States. So, the hearing-impaired person could receive vocational or technical instruction without having to, in most cases, leave their home states.

In addition to the programs established, Public Law 93-112 provided for funding for interpreters, notetakers and other educational assists for the hearing-impaired person who may wish to attend a program where no trained signers would be available. This funding made virtually any program available.

Continuing Education for the Hearing-Impaired

As the previous paragraphs indicate, postsecondary programs for the hearing-impaired, although not plentiful, are available. Nearly every state has some sort of program available, primarily in vocational areas, for hearing-impaired constituents. But what of those who would choose not to pursue a degree or certificate program? And what of those who, although possessing degrees, would like to continue their education? Available data would suggest that these programs are not nearly so prevalent.

Of those programs listed in the American Annals of the Deaf (1985, pp. 138-142) only 41 indicate continuing education programs for deaf persons. In other words, there appears to be less than one program per state available for the hearing-impaired person who would desire additional learning.

In 1984, 4,452 students graduated from secondary programs for the

hearing-impaired (American Annals of the Deaf, 1985, p.134). Of that number, 39.7% went to college, 12.4% went to some form of vocational training, 22.2% went to work, 11.4% are unemployed and the whereabouts of 14.2% of this group is unknown. Although these figures may appear acceptable, it is important to recall that these graduates are entering the workforce with lower levels of language skills, for the most part, and with few communication skills to deal with their bosses, peers, and, in rare cases, subordinates. Formal education, although appearing completed, is far from sufficient to assist these persons with life issues. The Gallaudet Alumni Survey (1984) reflected similar sentiments for the college-educated. These persons, though possessing degrees, felt a need for continuing education.

Costello (1977), in her sample of deaf adults, listed the following priorities for their continuing education:

1. Improvement of language skills
2. Better management of home, property, and money
3. Increased income through better jobs
4. Improved communication and interaction between deaf and hearing persons
5. Reduction of unemployment
6. The improvement of family life
7. Preparation for retirement or better use of retirement years
8. Safe and healthful living
9. The development of a desire for continuous learning
10. More responsible citizenship and effective leadership
11. Attainment of a high school diploma
12. Effective use of leisure time
13. Improvement of mental health
14. Safe driving and understanding of the law
15. Updating of present knowledge and skills
16. Enjoyment and appreciation of culture and the arts
17. Employment in paraprofessional roles
18. Improvement of oral and auditory skills

Costello's results are echoed by Votaw (1969), Boyd (1969), and Bambach

(1983). Bambach's study further indicated that 59% of those hearing-impaired persons sampled would be willing to pay a small amount for the classes desired. Votaw and Boyd strongly emphasized the need for further training in communication skills for the hearing-impaired. These areas, they suggest, are not only critical needs, but survival needs.

Nothing in the present technology would suggest that the incidence of hearing impairment in the population is on the decline. The numbers are on a steady incline, and there appears to be no current legislation which would suggest the creation of continuing education programs by the federal government.

John Naisbitt's Megatrends (1982) suggested that there were ten areas in which American society, as well as world society, is heading. These megatrends, he asserts, are transforming our lives. A review of selected megatrends seems appropriate in consideration of the hearing-impaired.

The first of the trends Naisbitt cites, which seems to have implications for the hearing-impaired is the movement from an industrial society to an information society. A significant majority of the hearing-impaired work in those areas considered as part of the industrial society. Naisbitt asserts that manufacturing positions grew by only 5 percent in the 1970s, whereas positions in information areas grew as much as 118 percent (p. 21). The computerization of these industrialized functions, as well the increased use of robotics, would suggest the reduction in the number of available positions in the industrial areas. Clearly, those hearing-impaired persons who work in these areas, like their hearing counterparts, will need to be retrained for the coming information society.

A second trend having implications for the hearing impaired is the movement

from institutional help to self help. The hearing-impaired, like many handicapped persons, have been socialized to trust and rely upon schools, teachers, and other community agencies for support. But, similar to other minority groups, the primary allegiance is to the deaf community--especially those within the community of similar communication orientations (i.e., oralists or signers) (Higgins, p. 68). This primary allegience, coupled with the lack of professionals (doctors, lawyers) within the deaf community, may suggest that these persons may become easy targets for charlatans; lacking professional contacts or personal information these unsuspecting persons could be easily misled. The education of deaf adults must include attention to their needs for "world" information.

Consistent with a need for a "world" orientation is the third trend of a movement toward a participatory democracy and the associated demands on the citizens. Although not all hearing persons have become involved in the workings of society, it is clearly a trend in today's American society for the consumer to become involved in the product being consumed. Consequently, larger numbers of persons are expressing interest in the workings of government, writing to congressmen and women voicing their opinions; more parents are becoming involved in the workings of their children's schooling to such a degree that protests to certain textbooks are being heard. The hearing-impaired parent, like the hearing parent, needs to be afforded the opportunity of influencing their child's education. But how? Higgins (p. 155) has suggested that interactions between the hearing and the deaf are often strained and confused for both parties. How do the conversants overcome these factors in such a way that communication can be facilitated? In the participatory environment, these questions must be answered

for both parties. If the hearing-impaired are to advance with society, they must develop these participation skills at a comfortable (and minimally-competent) level.

The final trend for consideration is that of the movement from a hierarchical society to one comprised of networks. This trend will pose one of the most significant challenges for the hearing-impaired. Again, the communication barrier between the hearing and hearing-impaired may introduce limitations to the degree of comfort either would feel in such a networking arrangement. Coupled with this lack of communication expertise, is a lack of psychological comfort (Higgins, p. 39) which may tend to characterize the hearing-impaired person's reactions. Clearly, this can reduce, if not eliminate, networking opportunities and further alienate the hearing-impaired from mainstream society. Formal networks between the hearing and hearing-impaired as well as training in the use of networking skills among the hearing impaired could be of significant benefit to the hearing-impaired community.

In addition to the future trends which have implications for the hearing-impaired, present-day issues are also somewhat bleak. In some parts of the country, unemployment among the hearing-impaired is four times that of the hearing (Moores, p. 265). Young deaf adults tend to be underemployed; the wages of young deaf adults are, in some cases, as much as 22% below that of their hearing counterparts. And finally, many training programs for the hearing-impaired are not regarded as helpful in the development of competitive skills (Adler & Williams, 1974).

Thus, the education of deaf adults does not differ (at least in purpose) from the education of deaf children: the purpose is to help the deaf adult

become integrated into a "different" society. The fast-changing pace of society would suggest that the added dimension of "...and adjust to its changing norms and interactions" must be considered.

Locating the Hearing-Impaired

Prior to expending a great deal of effort to develop or modify programs for the hearing-impaired, it may prove worthwhile to determine if a population of hearing-impaired persons exist within the community. Primary sources for determining the hearing impaired within a given community are the various state associations for the deaf. These organizations are designed as social organizations, primarily, for the deaf. They could provide some initial information as to numbers of hearing-impaired persons in a given community, educational levels, and educational needs. These organizations, however, do not come in contact with all hearing-impaired persons. Many deaf persons choose not to join these organizations. Those not joining the state associations, however, may be known by the members despite their lack of participation in association activities.

Listings of the various state organizations can be found in the April edition of the American Annals of the Deaf. The April edition lists all known programs providing services to the hearing-impaired. The services listed include social, educational, religious, and governmental agencies serving the needs of deaf persons. These are listed by state and should provide an effective "first-stop" for information.

In addition to the information recorded in the Annals, other social and welfare organizations may be recorded in the yellow pages within the community.

Further, a review of the listings for the various churches may provide the names of those churches providing interpreting or church-training services for the deaf. There may not necessarily be a correlation between the groups represented by the associations of the deaf and the church groups. Contacts with the social, welfare, and religious groups on a local level may provide additional information regarding the hearing-impaired persons within that community.

Working With the Hearing-Impaired

Although adult deaf persons resemble adult hearing persons, there are some significant differences. The purpose of these paragraphs is to suggest some of the similarities, and some of the differences which the would-be educator might encounter.

Knowles (1980, p. 26) suggests six roles for the adult educator. To a large degree, these roles are true for those working with the hearing-impaired as well:

—helping the learners diagnose their needs for particular learnings within the scope of the given situation;
—planning with the learners a sequences of experiences that will produce the desired learnings;
—creating conditions that will cause the learners to want to learn;
—selecting the most effectivemethods and techniques for producing the desired learnings;
—providing the human and material resources necessary to produce the desired learnings;
—helping the learners measure the outcomes of the learning experiences.

Like many adult learners, the hearing-impaired learner, for the most part, would have had very limited experience in this sort of learning experience. Few programs designed to educate the hearing impaired are designed with an andragogical model in mind, consequently this new level of participation may require an added degree of patience and facilitation.

Working with the hearing-impaired, as a hearing person, requires certain

attributes of the educator as well. Some of the attributes listed below should be considered:

1. A genuine interest in working with the deaf. This may be demonstrated by non-verbal interactions with the learner and attempts, however futile, at communication with the learner.

2. When attempting to communicate, speak at a normal conversational level and in the manner in which you are accustomed to speaking. Yelling or belaboring communication complicates the speechreading process for those hearing-impaired persons with speechreading skills. Keep the communication as natural as possible.

3. Face the hearing-impaired person when communication is desired.

4. Whenever possible, beards, bushy mustaches, pipes, cigars, cigarettes, or other items should not occlude the person's view of the lips.

5. Bear in mind that speechreading is most effective when the hearing-impaired person can see the speaker directly. Movement about by the instructor may diminish the person's ability to speechread.

6. Although one does not have to be an expert signer, efforts toward the learning of sign language are usually met with delight and support by the hearing-impaired person.

7. Use contacts with the hearing-impaired person as an opportunity to further knowledge about hearing impairment. The learner's experiences and perceptions may prove to be invaluable in future planning.

8. Communication, as might be suspected, is the critical aspect of the learning process. It may become appropriate to hire an interpreter, or notetaker for the hearing-impaired participant. Other deaf persons may prefer not to use

such support services. Although the educator does not have to know sign language, some knowledge of at least the sign language alphabet could be beneficial.

9. The use of hearing-impaired persons to provide counseling and assistance may also prove valuable. As was mentioned previously, the hearing-impaired may be distrustful of hearing persons. The presence of a hearing-impaired peer could prove to be helpful in dispelling some of these fears. Although there may be few (if any) professionally trained counselors who are hearing-impaired available in the community, a non-professional listening peer may prove to be of near-equal value.

Effective Learning Techniques

An underlying premise of any technique used with the hearing impaired is that it must not require hearing. Although this may appear to go without saying, often the hearing instructor may fail to recognize that a motion picture does require hearing on the part of the viewer.

A secondary consideration is that the technique employed, if done in a group, should be easily viewed by all participants. For this reason, lecture/discussions may prove to be somewhat ineffective. Group discussions, likewise, may be difficult for even the expert speechreader to follow as the discussion moves from person to person.

Among those specific techniques useful in educating the hearing-impaired the hearing impaired are:

Learning Centers—The adult education for the hearing-impaired program described by Dansky (1980) consists almost entirely of learning centers. She has

found this method to be most effective to meet the varied needs of the learners with whom she works.

Self-Directed Learning—This, likewise could prove to be quite valuable for the more mature learner. Given the limited experience of some of the hearing-impaired, this method may be best reserved for the more environmentally adept.

Use of deaf persons in course delivery—This has clear advantages and disadvantages. Among those advantages is the fact that this instructor may be better able to attract learners to the learning experiences and offer the learning in a manner which is easily understood by the participants. A disadvantage would be the fact that it may prove difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the learning on an on-going basis, unless the evaluator is proficient in sign language.

Use of interpreters or other support persons—This technique may also prove to be quite efficient in getting the learning across, but may prove to remove the instructor from direct contact with the learner. It is also possible that the interpreter may not be of the highest caliber and thereby complicate the learning process. A local chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf may prove to be helpful in identifying more skilled interpreters. Local R.I.D. chapters are listed in the April edition of the American Annals of the Deaf. Notetakers and tutors may also be helpful to the learning process, but as in the case of interpreters, may restrict more direct contact with the learner.

Captioned films—Captioning has probably been one of the most significant boosts to the education of adult deaf. Many television programs are now captioned, local and national newscasts are often captioned, and countless home

videos can be "heard" by the hearing-impaired through the use of decoding devices. Captioned educational media can be found by consulting the Annals.

Demonstration—Because of the near-exclusively-visual orientation of most hearing-impaired person, demonstrations can be powerful methods of learning. These should be used whenever possible and, if feasible, allow for "hands-on" manipulation by the hearing-impaired learner.

Although the techniques listed here are not exhaustive, they should provide an excellent starting point for presentation.

Summary

There is a clear and pressing need for the education of adult hearing-impaired persons. Numerous economic, social, and environmental factors suggest that the hearing-impaired are often the last to receive necessary information, yet may need the information more than the hearing.

The would-be teacher does not need to have a degree in education of the deaf, nor be skilled in sign language communication. Certain personality attributes contribute to effectively working with the deaf; a fundamental interest in helping is also beneficial.

Adult educators can greatly enhance the lives of this often-overlooked group through the implementation of a few effective learning strategies. The modification of in-place learning experiences can greatly benefit the lives of the hearing-impaired — and the hearing.

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